

Spring 2018

Doylestown

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Doylestown

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Languages & Literature
of Bard College

by

Emma Popkin

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

May 2018

Doylestown



Emma Popkin

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my family, who through their love and good humor has supported me. I dedicate this to my parents, my grandparents, my siblings and the rest of my mashugana mishpokhe with all my love.

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Her Call

I remember hearing my mother's voice when she called me for the second time that day; it didn't quiver but it was quieter than normal. Her voice was soft when she told me Maggie was in the hospital and that she had had seizures. They would be taking her in an ambulance to Philadelphia later that night.

When she first rang me, I'd missed her call. Teagan and I were driving back from the mall. The last week I'd been home, I forgot my winter jacket. We were scouring the racks but there were only a couple jackets left. The store was anticipating spring weather. The snow didn't melt for another two months. When I tried to ring back within the minute, she didn't answer. I told Teagan it was *weird*, or maybe I said that *I hated when that happened*.

I drove home the next day.

An Association with Doylestown

There is an association with the land, a yearning for sprouted seeds, in my mother's family. When my father's family was fleeing from the Russian Empire, holding onto the boat's rails, the Taylors were established on farmland now turned town.

With fresh baked bread, raspberry jam, cornbread and baked beans, into the 1960's, my maternal grandmother Shelley had created a hippie paradise in Bucks County, after living in a cramped Philadelphia borough. From my mother's reminiscing, I see her childhood through the lens of the Laura Ingalls Wilder books with her in pigtails riding a horse. I wasn't that far off.

I can name at least two stories about each family member three generations back on my father's side, but only have vague notions of my mother's family. Yet the land they stayed on was inspected and preened. Their farm flourished and they eventually sold it as plots for new families. In the 1960's, my second-great-aunt Gladys still lived at the family house, on a section of the original plot, with her garden in the town that I grew up in.

Selner Street

My family has lived the same Southeastern Pennsylvania town for seven generations. Expanding and contracting from 1850 to 2017, the house on Selner Street has altered from a ten-acre farm to a townhouse. A new family has moved into the old house. It currently sits above the corner of the Liberty Gas Station next to the church cemetery.

I pass the house and think of Gladys standing in the garden. Were there foxgloves or violets in her flowerbeds and did she take off her ring when she weeded? My mother wears Gladys' ring on special occasions. She was the only one of the three sisters who wanted it, with its wholesome diamond. It was bought from years of jealousy of her sister, years working as a secretary; it was her private wedding ring. She had bought it after her siblings were all married. She inherited the family house as the family spinster when she was forty-five and there she tended the garden and orchard.

The rows of apple and pear trees were to the right of the house, which is now paved over with asphalt. Covered with smooth concrete, apple seeds must sit under the rolling cars parked in stifling rows.

My mother remembers Gladys' basement opening up to a trove of slick green beans, carrots, peppers, corn and wax beans in the jars of Chow Chow, a Pennsylvania Dutch vegetable pickle mix, preserved for the winter. Looking through the Selner's recipes, I have come across their take on the Pennsylvania Dutch specialty over and over again, a practical favorite when the garden was bitten over with frost habitable only for cabbages and parsnips. My mother and her sisters visited

the creamed-colored house often. She remembers eating cool whip and German potato salad with bits of bacon. When Gladys' sister and her brother-in-law, my great grandparents, passed away, she took care of my grandfather and his sister. Her warmth is palpable in the delicate photographs in her wide smile as well in the amounts of butter and lard in her extensive recipes.

Gladys got rid of things sparingly, a child of both World Wars and the Depression, so that she saved the family Mason jars from 1858 onwards. Her family's' Mason jars now convene in a neat blue glass row on the shelves above our basement stairs, gleaming as the back door lets light onto them. I imagine Gladys and her mother, Lillian, in long dresses shucking beans and boiling glass jars, even if she probably wore an ironed 1960's dress with an apron.

I have pickled beets in clear glass mason jars with success, mixing cloves, bay leaves, sugar, salt, and pepper in a simple syrup to be poured over the purple slices. On their own, the new mason jars sit blandly next to the old blue glass. With the beets, the uncolored supermarket bought jars are transformed by the deep reds.

Pickled Beets

(Mrs. Strang)

Boil

1 cup vinegar

1 cup sugar

2 cups water from beets

Salt + Pepper

Add cooked beets - fill jars to
overflowing and seal.

Gladys' Pickled Beet Recipe given to her by her friend Mrs. Strang

Gladys' Pound Cake

The recipe pages have colored over the years to the color of egg yolks, yet they are intact. The typed letters are clear and all the recipes, except the ten Jell-O salads, have held up over time. Old recipes are interesting to me, yet the tuna salad with chunks of fibrous celery buoyant in the dyed Jell-O, for some reason, has never taken my fancy.

I rummaged in the pantry for the one index card. My mother and her mother have told me about the recipe over the years, *It's foolproof* and *always delicious*. The pound cake recipe has been passed down through five generations and is now on my iPhone just in case.

I could not find the original recipe that was weighed out in pounds. I did find one that calls for two sticks of butter to three cups of flour for one cake. It makes the whole kitchen smell like warm butter. The batter becomes extremely light because of the creaming process when the sugar and butter is whipped together until it is white and aerated. It feels light enough that you wouldn't guess how much butter goes into it. The cake is a special occasion dessert, and always a crowd pleaser.

For my mother's birthday, I decorated it with crystalized grapefruit rinds. To save some time and avoid sticky fingers, it would be delicious with fresh fruit and whipped cream, with a citrus glaze, or with a sprinkling of powdered sugar. My mother remembers Gladys encasing it in swirls of white Italian meringue icing.

POUND CAKE

1 cup butter creamed with
2 cups sugar, salt, vanilla.
3 cups flour
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups milk
2 beaten eggs

(MOTHER)

Lillian May's Pound Cake

Cream the butter with the sugar in a mixer for around five minutes or until the butter is white. Add one egg at a time on low speed. Then add in a pinch of salt and two teaspoons vanilla extract.

Sift the flour with the baking powder. Slowly add in a couple large spoonfuls of flour, adding in a little milk after each addition of flour. This will prevent the flour from spilling over the bowl while it is mixing. Add the flour in several small additions with the milk until you have added the 3 cups of flour and the $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of milk. Mix until combined. Do not over mix the batter or the cake will be dense. The batter should be light and aerated.

Butter and flour the cake pan before pouring in the batter. Bake the cake at 325 degrees for an hour and a half.



Gladys' Pound Cake with Caramelized Orange Peels and Whipped Cream

At College

When I call my grandmothers from school, we talk about the books we are reading. I tell them about a short story and they each give me a novel.

This week, It's my turn to pick a book for the Wednesday book club. I'm considering H is for Hawk, Shelley told me. Is it fiction or non-fiction? The path I was walking in the woods turned a corner. I heard a squirrel screech on the tree above. *It's a memoir about a British woman dealing with grief.* The lake was just visible past the tree line, I told her where I was; I usually called when I was walking. *We're reading Whitman in my literature class this week.* She was probably looking out at the ocean from her tree top view, *I remember how excited I was reading new books in college. I loved reading Dickinson and Blake.* I needed to run to the store after this, *Did you know Dickenson was an avid baker? I found her gingerbread recipe online.* Maybe I should get some more flour? *No, I didn't know that. Would you send me the book with her recipes? Her poetry is so beautiful.*

I called Sharen the next week. We talked about *Call the Midwife* and the shoes we might buy for the summer. She told me she was reading a book about Shackleton. After we had talked about adventures and men with long beards, I told her I was reading Isaac Babel. She wasn't surprised and quoted a line from the *Early Stories*, *'the world seems to me a gigantic theater where I am the only one without my glasses.'*^{*} *Literature is a good thing to have. Do you know what I mean? Through your life and when you grow old. It helps when you foster relationships.* I asked her, *Do you mean it helps to empathize?* She hesitated a second, *Yes and to teach you. Throughout your life, it's something to hold onto.*

^{*} *The Collected Stories of Isaac Babel*

That Last Moment

We drove past the same sights. I seemed to recognized the same spots, barely noticing new brick houses or streets. Germantown came and went, I remember the Jewish Center and the football field where I had seen two boys playing. They were wearing matching grey tracksuits when they tackled their father. I can't remember if it was before the second surgery or before the first. Sam was driving Lily and I to visit Maggie; I thought of her red hair in pigtails when she was little. When she had tied them on top of her head with small fabric scrunchies, she had called them waterfalls. The incision was small and only left a line on her scalp; the surgeons only had to shave off a strip. I have ten tabs of Amazon pages of headscarves opened up for later.

I dissociated, I couldn't look into other children's rooms in the oncology ward. It wasn't us. We didn't know if she had cancer.

The hour before the doctors came in to tell the prognosis, we veered her in a wheelchair to the gardens. It was sunny that day, warm for a winter afternoon. The mid afternoon sun shone on her hair, warm and glowing. Her cheeks were pink. She looked so beautiful and healthy in that moment. Going back to the room, she walked half of the way there.

Somehow, I knew in that moment she could be sick. She was happy. It was peaceful for that half hour. My chest clenched and I felt small thumbs rattling in my right side.

My parents had suspected we wouldn't like the diagnosis when the nurses voice got softer that afternoon. She prolonged her sentences.

It took that beautiful moment to know she was in danger. I couldn't anticipate it then, I thought it would maybe be Stage One cancer and she would be out soon.

When the doctors sat us down, I wasn't prepared for the actual diagnosis.

Mother

They came together eventually. The dough stuck to the counter. The marzipan crumbled to the touch.

Time let it change, transforming the wet dough to round loafs, crumbled almond flour and sugar to a paste.

The dough stretched in her hand.

At the Culinary Institute where she taught in her twenties, young cooks rushed, striking the dough furiously. A slick knife couldn't cut fast enough. The weights never tipped correctly, the rushed mistakes were a pendulum casting a shadow on their career.

My mother's hands moved slower now, stacking dishes, slicing tomatoes for the ratatouille. It was the last day of the weekend before I had to drive back to school. I grabbed four sets of silverware for the table; Maggie was lying down. The stove buzzed. The pan sizzled. She looked up at the clock. I saw her getting out the basil she had picked from her backyard garden. She ripped the leaves and set them aside for later.

WORK STATION	TUESDAY MARCH 19/26 APRIL 9 ^{Roos Verge} ②	WEDNESDAY MARCH 20/29 APRIL 3/10	THURSDAY ^{Roos} MARCH 21/28 APRIL 4/11	FRIDAY MARCH 22/29 APRIL 12	SATURDAY ^{St Emillion} MARCH 30/23 APRIL 6/13
GARDE MANGER	Souffle d' Epinards En Tomato	Cervelas De Fruits De Mer En Brioche	Terrine De Volaille Aux Pistaches	Feuillete De Primeurs a La Marjolaine	Brunch/ Oeuf Poche Surprise Dinner/ Salade De Ris D Veau Et De Crustaces
POISSONIER	Moules Farcies Au Curry	Filet De Limande Grenobloise	Feuillete De Saint Jacques Provencale	Truite Farcie Aux Petits Lecumons	Special of the day/ Paupiette De Sole Au Coulis De Brocoli
SAUCIER	Poussin Roti Sur Canape	Escalope De Volaille Grillee, Garniture Viennoise	Entrecote Bordelaise	Aiguillette de Boeuf Au Gingembre	Special of the day/ Gigot D'Agneau Provencale
PATISSERIE	Gratin De Fruits Printaniers	Paris Breast	Bavaroise Au		

For Exam - to

NAME

FIRM

384 Bleehen

Bleehen en Paris

Crummet shop

1. Creme de fenouil - fenouil soup - marinade ^{tomato} fenouil
2. terrine de legume - carrot, brocoli, guch, w/cuc
3. soufflee de canard aux tomates
4. flau de volaille - beurre blanc aux fines herbes (parsley, fennel, chervil)
5. filet de chade bonne femme - fish stock
6. turban de crevette ^{flavoured} fish mousse
7. filet de limande Grenobloise
8. 4. Tagues w/ endive & pommes mousses
9. escalope de saumon w/ chervil
10. Paupiette de sole aux coulis de brocoli
11. Rievorte volaille aux pomme parisiennes ^{avec legume}
12. dille d'agneau farce - lamb stuffed w/ chick mousse garnish w/ herb & rest ^{67% best for 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20.}
13. tomates grillees aux sauce charon - pomme croquette
14. supreme de caneton ^{aux} fleur de thyme) rid de pomme
15. " (tomate) aux citron vert) (not rest) d'achesse bouquette aux legume (turnip, carrot, herb & rest) 2 or 3 each alternately - glace
16. Feuillete de poire
17. tarte tatin ^{aux}
18. Charlotte ^{aux} pomme - w/ cinamon avec aglaise (addition de plate)
19. charlotte aux poire aux charberry couli ^{cannaberge}
20. mousse aux chocolats aux tuiles arlamande

Burgundy Onion Bread 4 loaves

5 c. AP

1 T. salt

2 T. sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ oz. yeast

2 c. milk

8 T. butter

400° - 45 min

$\frac{1}{2}$ c. walnuts

$\frac{3}{4}$ c. onions

Mother's Burgundy Onion Bread

Over the stove in a small pot or in the microwave, warm $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups milk and butter until the butter has melted. Reserve a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk.

While the milk and butter mixture is cooling, combine $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. ($1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons) yeast with 2 tablespoons sugar and the reserved $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of warm milk. The milk should be warm to the touch but not hot. Let the yeast mixture sit for ten to fifteen minutes or until the yeast blooms, you will be able to see bubbles on the surface.

Add in the five cups of flour and the milk and butter mixture and mix the dough with a dough hook on medium speed until the dough has come together. Continue to mix the dough for another five to ten minutes to kneed it, until the

dough is one cohesive ball that does not stick to the bowl. Take the bowl off the mixer and cover the bowl. You can also hand mix the dough in a bowl and kneed it on a countertop by hand.

Let the dough rise for an hour to an hour and a half, depending on the temperature in the room, until it has doubled in bulk.

Finely slice one onion. Punch down the dough and mix in the chopped onions and the walnuts. Mix with a dough hook in an electric mixer or knead in by hand in the bowl. On the counter, sprinkle a thin dusting of flour. Divide the dough into four equal pieces. Shape the dough into rounds.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Let the dough rise on a baking sheet with cornmeal scattered underneath for one to two hours until they have doubled in bulk. Bake for 45 minutes and let cool for a half hour before cutting into the loafs.

The Diagnosis

Hospital lights have always felt too bright for comfort. There are the yellow lights that shed enough light to decipher the shapes from the shadows and there are the neon lights that block out comprehension. They're used to examine, not to see. Purveyors of migraines and cop show interrogations, they do not cast anyone in grace.

He'd told me to go straight and to the right. The hallway was filled with yellow lights and I used it to my advantage. They obscured the entrance to the hospital rooms so that the dimmed scenes were illegible to a passerby without further inspection. I couldn't bring myself to look in on the napping parents or the crowded rooms centered around white beds. They weren't our circumstance, not yet. I only looked if there were little kids playing on scooters or running back and forth between the hallway and the doorframe. They were much younger than Maggie.

The nurses smiled or ignored me. I preferred the latter. I wouldn't have to smile back. The Ronald McDonald family room was to the right. There wasn't an yellow archway or a cut out clown like I expected, instead there was a greeter there to ask if you wanted a sandwich the lunch place next door had donated. Luckily, she wasn't there this time. It saved me a moment.

The yellow wallpaper in the bathroom was the only nod to its namesake. I washed my hands and snuck out. Before getting back in the room, I pumped hand-sanitizer on. If I could, I tried to wash more than pump. It stung my hands, probing each raw crack. In a rush I used it, the doctors would be in soon.

A couple of women in white coats walked into the room. I knew I wouldn't cry but as they talked, I heard a voice beside me crack.

The Library

The night of the diagnosis, I curled into my mother's arms. The humiliation was not enough to keep me from the comfort. On a hospital mat, I slept the best I had all week, falling asleep instantly next to my mother. She stared at my sister sleeping in her bed most of the night. I would wake up to see the glare of her phone when she sent work emails. Visa applications for the students coming next fall filled her screen. Last night I could barely sleep. The heaviness of my head would not quell my throbbing eyes.

Waiting in the college library with my head on my desk, the lights around me are too dull. Half asleep, I wonder what it would feel like to sway like an Orthodox man murmuring a daily prayer.

Class

I sit in class listening to other people talk. Words drift from their lips; theses break to form a new question. The professor moderates the square table discussion on utopian politics. I imagine the words piling up in the center of the table; I'm still not ready to pick through them.

Taft

When I drove back from class, I thought about of my great- grandfather driving to Philly in his produce truck in the middle of the night. I thought of the roads he would drive by and how they would be different from the airport parking lots that sat there now. When Taft was ten years old, his father sent him to get potatoes from Maine. Reaching his smooth hand out the window to feel the winter breeze, in a pick up truck he drove there and back with a license saying he was sixteen. He stopped at the farm over night; they offered him a stack of cooked corn, all you can eat. Sitting around the men with their trucks outside, he ate until he began leaning to the left side. He wouldn't have to stop for lunch the next day. On his drive back, his stomach was bloated making him sit lower on the seat; he had to lean to see the rearview mirror. Potatoes were stacked up to the rim of the truck's edge. They'd last the season.

My father joined Taft once on his early rides to the Philly market. They left at two in the morning and got back at eleven, with my father slumped to the side of the truck with his face flat against the window. They had unloaded carts of cantaloupe and carrots. For lunch, Taft let him eat as many cantaloupes as he liked. The melon was sticky and sweet. After eating one and a quarter, he had trouble getting back up to unload the cucumbers. When they got home, Ruth gave them sandwiches and coffee. He hadn't told her about the five dollars in his pocket that he had won at the poker table when they were waiting for the chefs to come in. When he got back home, he showed Danny his spoils and asked how to blow smoke rings.



Great-grandparents, Ruth and Taft Popkin

The Drive Back

The trees surrounded the road, splitting the wilderness off from the cars, making the scenery a pretty site to pass by. After merging, a car sped past, racing in front of me. Like a dog running in a pack it wanted to be in the lead. On my way down, I picked an episode of the New Yorker podcast to listen to. David Means was narrating Sherman Alexie in the background. I started to think about salmon and it made me crave lox. Sam was ordering lunch, maybe he'd get a couple bagels for breakfast tomorrow too.

A grey Hyundai was going 40 in front of me no other cars were around. The cops sometimes hid in the tree line waiting to meet their monthly bonus. I couldn't see any around. With the turn signal on, I sped past staying in the left lane. I'd been told to speed in the slow lane you'd have a lesser chance of the cops riding over. I'd slow down once I got past the next car.

On the recording, the short story said something about fish bones, salmon bones scattered over the sky or did he say they were stuck within a single body? My mind turned to soup broths and x-rayed bodies. Small bones splayed out on a metal sheet thinning out as they faced outward. Would fish bones roast in an oven like marrow bones on a sheet tray to make soup from?

Yom Kippur

The table creaked under the weight of the fish platter. The white fish gapped at the rolls of lox and assortment of schmears. With each hand reaching over for a bagel slice, the table quieted with the relieved pressure. The New Year was closing on the scene of bloated, satisfied bellies plagued an hour ago by the thundering guilt of eating that one cracker that did nothing to satiate the growls.

Licking the last remnants of peanut butter swirl ice cream, Ben leaned back. The spoon gleamed with the emptiness of being wiped of the last drop of ice cream.

Wet kisses and scratching chairs filled the room as everyone got up to leave. *Call me later and let me know what you're doing Saturday* preceded guilt trips and the encouragements of, *Let me know if she gets into the play. I'd be happy to come see her sing!* The evening concluded with the sigh of keys turning in cars and of headlights scrutinizing silent highways.

On the September night, the synagogue had let out light from its windows into the stirring forest. The night before, we had driven up to reach the little temple on the hill.

Inside, the building was dotted with figures in white. My black dress was a stamp on a synchronized background. The white talesim encompassed the congregation like music curving to their bodies. The black shawl I wore hugged me but did not flutter. Yet my body knew to lean somehow, a note moving on a line of sheet music.

The Shema, Crosby, Stills & Nash and Allen Ginsberg were one echo in the small synagogue. A hippie call to the New Year.

The night breeze bristled, shifting my attention to the lightness of my stomach. I should have eaten more than a cheese sandwich. At the train station my eyes had been glued to the screen. Rushing to get on the earliest train, I hadn't grabbed something to eat. The Munster cheese on the hamburger bun would have been enough if I didn't know that it would be the last thing I would eat for 24 hours. The thought of stacks of Jersey tomatoes, bowls of white fish and kippered salmon waiting for me made my stomach growl, in tune with the music.

The Heron Shirt

She wore the grey sweater I've had since high school. It's printed with a pattern of dark grey herons flying on their own next to one another. I used to wear it with knee high black boots and jeans, but she wore it now with a yellow skirt in my doorway, *do you know where my phone is?* I wouldn't have worn a skirt. Since she was fourteen, my sister started finding ways to distinguish herself from me. *Yeah, one sec. I'll call it. Do you want a snack, I'm going downstairs?* She shook her head, *Not now, I'll meet you down stairs in a little.* We heard the phone ring in the other room. *I'll bring up apples and peanut butter.* Going to grab the phone, she smiled back, *Thanks.*

Ruth's Secret Recipe

Ruth kept a tub of cheese puffs next to her pink chair not because she couldn't cook. She decided, in her nineties, that she had lived long enough and was going to eat whatever she wanted. It was useless trying to convince her otherwise. In the mini fridge of her small nursing home apartment, she kept black cherry sodas, which Sam and I were allowed to have along with sugar wafers on our visits to see our great-grandmother.

Cooking was her form of control. It was what she was good at. My great-great aunt Bea was the gorgeous sister who got proposed to on the street. Told by her parents to take care of her sister, Ruth cooked for her family and Bea's. Her matzo balls were light and her briskets were succulent.

Ruth held the secrets to the Popkin family recipes. When friends or family members asked for recipes, there would be one ingredient missing.

Years ago, deciding between sour cream, applesauce or a little bit of both, I had munched on a few latkes. The menorah was gleaming in the corner. Danny was yelling into the kitchen to ask for more creamed herring. Ruth had come up to me looking between the latkes and me. Whispering, she had asked if I knew the secret to her latkes recipe. I had shaken my head, smelling roses and baby powder. The secret lingered in my ears. The rest of the night I had beamed with the knowledge.

Years later, my dad told me that her secret ingredient in her latkes was not zucchini, as she had told me when I was seven; it was Lipton's powdered onion soup mix. That probably wasn't the secret either it might never be complete without her. Though, I bet it was a huge glob of schmaltz.

Potato Pancakes

10 large potatoes
peeled and put in
ice water.

4 eggs

6 T. grated onion

1 t salt & pepper

1/4 pt. onion soup

4 T. Matzo meal

Cut potatoes into small
pieces. Put about
5 cups into Cuisinart
or blender. Put sieve
in a bowl - to drain
liquid out of potatoes.
When all potatoes are
grated fine put in
large bowl.

Add all the ingredients
to potatoes. Mix well

Fry in large frying
pan - add 6 T.
Crisco in pan - heat
until hot.

Add large tablespoon
to pan. Brown well
on one side - turn
and brown.

Remove on paper towels

Can be frozen

Ruth's (30 small)

6 lg. potatoes

3 eggs

1 onion

3 or 2 T matzo meal

S + P

Crisco - fry in



Great-grandmothers, Ruth Popkin and May Medoff

A Mislaid Dinner Invitation

Bea was the attractive sister, a Rita Hayworth with blond hair. Her morning began with a beaming smile as the paperboy rode past. When she walked out to lunch a cabby threw out a proposal and a kiss from his window. Men stopped her on her way to the butchers to ask for her hand in marriage or at least dinner at *Antonio's*.

Bea was protected by her beauty. Her curly blond hair would have been a ticket to the country club until they heard her last name, Corosh, or worse her married name, Goldman. At their spotless house with its grandfather clock ticking in the background, Bea years later hosted dinner parties for her husband, Sydney, with New Jersey lawyers and politicians. The couple even met Irving Berlin. The whole street was humming "There's No Business Like Show Business" after they heard the news.

Bea's parents preened over her and her lawyer of a husband and were excited to hear 10 years after their marriage that Sydney was getting a promotion. The whole neighborhood of Ewing, New Jersey heard that Max Corosh's son-in-law was going to be a New Jersey State Appellate Judge. The old paperboy passed by Bea and Sydney's house bragging to his girlfriend that, when he was younger, the Judge's wife had blown him a kiss on several occasions.

As the younger sister, Ruth still helped out her mother Fanny as the town's electrolysist. Large busted women and young men would come to their apartment to rid themselves of pesky hairs. Their heads leaned back anticipating the sting.

When Ruth was married, her parents visited her house but did not mention with as much zeal Taft's fruit and vegetable business. Smoke smells came in with him when Taft came home from work. Leaving at 3:00am, he came home in the afternoon with dirt underneath his nails from lifting crates of cantaloupe and potatoes in the winter. Ruth berated him on occasions for the cigar smells on his coat from when he waited with his crew in the mornings.

The bus was late. Ruth was used to waiting for the school bus to usher in Jerry's stained shirts and Cathy's unfurled curls, it usually came ten minutes past its drop off time. The car was in the shop waiting for Taft to drive her over. Her grocery list and a pouch of rugelach were still intact in her purse. Maybe she should have called Bea to pick her up, but it would be better to wait until Sydney was out for the week.

She took the last seat in the front row, near the door but not close enough to get knocked into by newcomers waving their bags. After they passed the school, Ruth tried to reposition her purse to get ready to go. Ferry street was passing by, when she saw a face near her purse.

Four inches away brown eyes looked up at her and small lips on round cheeks asked, "cinnamon?" No mother was close by. He kept on staring at the purse. "Aren't you supposed to be at school?" The boy shrugged.

"Can I have one?" The woman across the row looked at the boy. They were passing Olden Avenue. She had two more stops.

"They're for my sister and her kid," but she snuck one out of the bag and pulled out a tissue from the left pocket. With crumbs on each side of his -cheeks, he

asked if it was one of their birthdays. “No,” she couldn’t think of a good reason why she brought them except that she had made them and saved the other half for Taft, Ruth, and Jerry.

He got up leaving the tissue on his seat, she waved over to the black shoes moving their way to the door, “pick that up or you won’t get another.” She wasn’t sure why she said it, she wasn’t going to give away any more. They had taken two hours to make. It worked but he still left crumbs. She brushed them away. Across the row, the woman’s bottom lip curled down to her chin but she looked away before Ruth met her gaze.

Bea was having the attorney and his thin-ankled wife over for dinner Saturday. Ruth and Taft had left for Florida on vacation on Thursday and were home by Monday. The hotel was nice, the towels were fluffy and she didn’t have to clean them later. The bed was too stiff. The heat was unbearable it made her shvitz and her hair was curling up at the roots. Taft was laying on the bed napping by the time Ruth decided she had to get back to her own house. The kids could barely understand their parent’s Yinglish and wanted pasta by the time they came back. Bea let out an audible breathe when she heard Ruth was coming home, “could you help with the dinner?”

Ruth was over with a notepad the next day. Bea and Ruth nestled in the parlor, their conversation muffled the ticking sound of the grandfather clock in the background. Sydney was would be home tomorrow from Philly and Donald was at school, leaving them an undisturbed moment.

She crossed out romaine from the grocery list. "Cauliflower then. The ones Taft brought me last night were delicious. The stalks were nicely crisp. He knows not to bring me bruised ones," Ruth said, thinking about the brisket she made last night. It sat ready in the fridge. The fat needed to be skimmed off and the roasted carrots rearranged when she got home. "I'll have him bring three more. Roasted with a little olive oil and salt they'll be delicious, especially with the brisket."

The list got longer as more vegetables were added when the clock rung 11:00. Ruth left to start the side dishes. Bea would make chopped herring as an appetizer, which is the fusion of an apple, an onion, four hard boiled eggs, a slice of rye bread soaked in vinegar, and herring in a Cuisinart.

The recipe is something my father loves, which my mother and I cannot wrap our mindss around. *A mushy, vinegar soaked piece of bread, really?* My father assures me, *It's delicious. I'll make it for you with the little bit of egg yolk grated on top*, he keeps on telling me. *It'll be the first and last time you'll used the microplane*. He hasn't made it for me yet.

With dishes in her arms and sitting on the stoop, Ruth walked in to see Bea in a clean apron. It was decorated with scalloped edges with small circles within each curve. Both carrying the dishes in, Bea ushered her into the room, "Did Taft drop you off? You should have let him in." The brisket with pearl onions and roasted carrots ornamented the side of the roast. It, along with the cauliflower, the green beans, and an apple cake, was positioned next to a crystal bowl filled with chopped herring. Ruth repositioned a carrot, "He had to get back."

“The table’s set and I’ve preheated the oven.” Bea opened the oven an inch to test the temperature, “They’ll be here in an hour.”

Ruth stood at the counter in her sneakers. “I skimmed the fat off. The cauliflower only needs to heat for ten minutes.” A drop of liquid splashed over the top when Ruth repositioned the brisket platter. Bea rushed over with a napkin moping the blob up.

“Oh here,” Bea handed Ruth an apron seeing her look down at her dress. Straightening it out, Ruth saw a brown smudge on the hem. “Just a bit of schmutz.”

“Ann got another bottle of Scotch, just in case. The napkins needed ironing but a little extra starch helped.” Bea replaced a fork, lining it up with the starched napkins. They moved around the table set with the white tablecloth with embroidered purple crocuses huddled in green patches.

At half past four the brisket juices were coming back up to a boil and the cauliflower was about to go into the over. “I’ll just leave this here. Call to let me know how they liked it.” Bea moved past Ruth to put the kettle on for a quick tea before dinner.

Bea moved to reach for an oven mitt, “What are you and Taft having for dinner?” The pearl onions gleamed perfectly with the sauce coating each one.

The bus would be at Court Street at 4:30, “A bit of kasha and varnishkes we have to be out by six. We’re going out for a play after dinner.”

A finger slipped when she was placing the brisket dish on the oven cozy, “Oh, you two never go out. What is it called?” The roasting pan sat on the square without wobbling, no sauce spilled out. Bea’s apron was still spotless.

Ruth checked the clock, she'd need to stay and have Taft pick her up if she missed the bus. The Davises would be over in thirty minutes. "The varnikus? It's just regular buckwheat," but Bea interrupted her, insisting about the play.

Ruth dotted at the spot where she had dripped the sauce, "Taft bought the tickets from Lois," she started taking off the apron, "Mrs. Davis has two children right?"

"No, three. When?" the crease above her eyebrow was puckering like it did when she was annoyed.

"You are your *husband* aren't the only ones with a life Bea," Ruth got up, "I have to go, *unless* you need me to stay." Bea walked to the mirror in the next room. The teakettle was starting to sputter. "Is Sydney coming over soon to set the bar?"

Bea called over, "I just need to put on a little lipstick." The lipstick popped when she opened up the bottle, "I'll call you tomorrow to let you know if Mrs. Davis picks at any of her food."

Ruth assured her, "She won't." Everyone liked her brisket, if they didn't wouldn't dare to say otherwise.

Ruth sat in the same seat coming back home. She reached in her purse and found the bag of rugelach. Turning to look back, she saw they had already passed Court Street. Jerry could run them over in the morning or she could pack it in his lunch. Anyway, she'd be back next week. She reached into the bag and started to eat a few cookies. She'd be damned if they weren't delicious.

Ruth's Rogelekh Recipe

Recipe:

From: Ruth Popkin ~~100, 100, 100, 100~~ Makes:

2 Cups Flour 1 Egg yolk
1/2 lb Sweet Butter 1/2 tsp Salt
1/2 Cup Sour cream 1/2 Tsp Sugar

Mix Together: 2 cups Flour - Butter ^{Slabs} ~~Slabs~~ Room temp
Salt

Add Sour cream / ~~Beaten~~ Egg Yolk in S.C
mix untill it form a Ball

Form into loaf shape - put in Refridg over night cover
- Slice into 1/2 inch pieces



Take 4 slices of dough

Roll out Thin on Flour Board

Sprinkle with Sugar + Cinnamon
+ Toasted Chopped Pecans

⊗ Cut Dough into Wedges Add

Filling Roll wedges Long end
to Point Brush on Egg Wash

Bake on Parchment Paper at
350° 30 min
Till Golden Brown

Filling: 1 Lb Dry Appricots
1 Box white Rasins

In a Sauce Pan

1 cup H₂O

1/2 Orange

1/2 Lemon

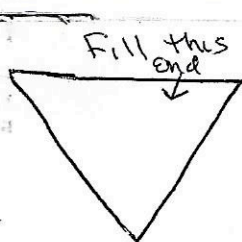
Appricots

1/2 Cup Sugar

Cook untill Soft Add 1 cup white Rasins

Take Orange + lemon out when cool

Put mixture into Blender Chop up fine



* Toast Pecans in
oven for Better
Flavor

* make Egg Wash from
Whole Egg Brush on

The Parade of Well of Well-Wishers

They came in a parade of well-wishers after the diagnosis, not in lines or matching outfits but in a cascade of different beats. One would knock on the door with a roast chicken and the next would come with 'Vietnamese pork tacos,' whatever those are. Some would rush away without saying hi to respect our misery while others would wait at the door to hear the new details. The latter were often acquaintances. They usually didn't stick around when I answered the door; they didn't know who I was nor did I know who they were.

One afternoon when my sister and I were sitting on the couch, we heard a knock and saw a blond woman speed walking away. By the time I got to the porch, I couldn't see which car she had gotten in. A basket full of clementines, handmade pastas, soups, sauces, and coffee grinds was sitting on our rocker along with a card cramped with signatures and well wishers.

When I call home, I ask about the food the neighbors or their friends had brought over. The food is usually so-so. My parents appreciate it all but are often stuck with a strange smorgasbord of leftovers in the fridge. The worst was the 'turkey lasagna soup' in a cast iron pot they had to hand wash and bring back to the neighbor responsible. The soup was bland with large streams of lasagna noodles mingling with turkey clumps. The best was a tie between my grandmother's friend who made Sephardic chicken with dates and lemon rinds and my father's friend who brought over mushroom barley soup, salad, a brisket and an apple cake. They shared the feast with my sister's boyfriend when he came over. The best cooks know from experience to bake in disposable tin trays so that we don't have to bother

driving their dishes back. Tupperware and home dishes seem to be used as a ploy by our neighbors to get my mother to talk to them. Before this month, I wouldn't be able to say I had ever heard of Tupperware warfare. Yet, somehow it is a little problem piling up like the casserole dishes by our sink. When I next get home, I'll stack the dishes in my car to return them to their nosy owners.

My Words are No Longer Sufficient

My vocabulary has had to change. It is not sufficient and it is not always appropriate. My texts need to gush empathy. The one sentence responses are no longer enough, unless it is to my parents. We communicate in *yes-es* and *I'm almost there-es*.

I have said the wrong thing twice, not out of malice. I've been too tired to pick my words. They slip out of my grasp.

I was finally starting to connect with my sister's boyfriend. I turned past the gas station but still couldn't remember the author I was trying recommend to him. He had told me he was reading Fitzgerald in English class. It was warm out. Maggie was feeling well. I dropped them off at the corner before parking the car. She would need to take a nap. When I walked in, they were getting a snack. At that I remembered, I blurted *Toomer*, my voice carried through the room, *It's Jean Toomer*. Within the thin air, he laughed. I cringed. I had to stop myself from staring at her face; it was ok. My shoulders were still clenched.

The next time I apologized, my words carried to my mother's clenched jaw. She was wiping off the counter; my body slumped. The heat was making my joints swell. When I told my mom my knee pain was *not life or death*.

Bowling Alleys

I looked at schools out West when I was in high school. Hiking paths and coffee shops endeared me towards Seattle; I didn't expect to live a couple hours from home. The drives home for the weekend aren't too bad, a fact I'm grateful of now.

I write at the coffee shop on the weekdays and go to bowling alleys on Thursday nights before I drive home the next day. *Drunk bowling is what we need after midterms. David will DD.* She tried to grab at a toy penguin ignoring the fact that no one ever won at the claw machine game, *Where are you going after graduation?* I still had tabs open looking for grad schools in Scotland, *I don't know, you?* The toy slipped again but she put another quarter in, *Maybe Spain, maybe the city.* It was annoying how New Yorkers called it "the city" as if other cities were just towns. The screen lit up behind us, a strike. *It's your turn,* he called over. *You go, I want to try another go at this.* She had one more quarter. *You know you're not going to get it.* Shrugging, she turned back to it, *What's one more quarter.*

The First Passover

It was the first Passover I wasn't with my family. I could probably count the number of holidays I've missed on my hand, a few Rosh Hashanahs during exams and maybe an Easter. A friend had a mini seder with me, a sederele. I learned the iminutive in Yiddish today so that I could speak in miniatures and in endearments, like meydele and bubele. We drank Kedem and a bottle of sangria-ele later while we watched a movie on the couch. Before eating dinner, I lit two small candles with a lighter. The crank twirled beneath my thumb while I sang the brokhe off tune. There was no one else to cushion my voice, she didn't know the prayer. The free haggadah app I found first was in French. I had to translate a culture she didn't know in a language that was foreign to her. At least I practiced speaking another language.

Mishpokhe

I keep on reading Grace Paley's short stories, expecting to learn something new. While reading "My Father Addresses Me on the Facts of Old Age," I laugh at the quiet humor of the father holding his beating heart and read it again. In such depth, you would think you could swim in it.

Attempting something new, I go over things my grandmother has told me, *the women in our family don't go grey, they go blond*. No, I'll keep that in my pocket for later, *family is the most important as well as having close girlfriends*.

The word mishpokhe doesn't glide off my tongue but tickles the back of my throat. I haven't gotten the hang of the guttural ה, in משפחה. What would Grace Paley's stories sound like in Yiddish? Would the guttural letters seep into the crevasse of her empathy or crush the text's duality?

Oregon

My brother was supposed to visit our grandparents in the spring with his girlfriend. They got a refund for their tickets when our grandparents decided to rent an apartment in Doylestown until the summer. I called the night after they canceled the flight; they would be missing the ocean air.

The salty breeze drifted through the town naturally seasoning the plates of food. Yet the abundance of the forest sweetened the mollusks, vegetation and fish. Nowhere else was the salmon so delicately sweet and innately salty. The flesh was a light pink rippled with muscles and fat. Only here were the blackberries so large and luscious. When they ripen in the summer, Shelley is known to make blackberry cordial that she gives out to friends as gifts.

Bears and mountain lions still wandered the woods collecting their own stash of abundance. Sharks prowled the waters, rarely attacking humans, having enough to eat themselves and because the waters were too cold for humans to dive into.

I come every couple of years to visit my grandparents on their perch on the hill. They moved to the wilderness from our small town ten years ago. Shelley's brick lined garden in Pennsylvania became, in Oregon, a hillside balcony of roses and ferns. Foxgloves were replaced by blackberry bushes and visiting rabbits exchanged for black bears and eagles. Bushes rustled as their small motor vehicle rambled up the hilltop on the dirt road up to the tree house in the woods. Expansive glass windows, painted woodcarvings, and bird skulls adorn the Architect's and the Naturalist's hideout in the woods.

The Hawk

They called to tell me that they had saved a hawk. It was sitting on the side on the road with its feathers peaked out, stunned. It didn't take much to revive it. When Shelley got out of the car to pick it up, the hawk flew away. She called with Maggie on their way to radiation.

I saw my own hawk a couple days after. Its feathers were askew, blowing in the wind. It must have been an adolescent hawk, only some of its feathers were the dark red brown of a mature red-tail. I drove past it without stopping; I was on the way to the diner with a friend. On the main road, I slowed down to see it but couldn't find a place to pull over, wondering if it needed my help.

Spring

The buds are starting to appear on the trees, spots of red and pink are appearing from the tendrils of branches. The winter had gone on so long I didn't know if I could trust the warm weather to stay. It had snowed last week. I looked over at the magnolia tree afraid to see the buds freeze over.

I'm going to go do some handstands. I watched Teagan's cheeks blush as the blood rushed to her head. *The ground's too muddy here.* She moved over, poking the ground with her toe. *Try going to the right.* The sun had come out and lit a spot next to the other benches.

The Faith Stories

I don't skip to the end of novels like my friends used to. I linger on the first page. Reading into too much in the first sentence, so that I imagine the middle does not hold too many surprises. Yet, when I tried to write my last sentence, I skipped to the end of Grace Paley's "Listening."

After all the stories, I'm surprised that Faith did not get her absolution.

Artist's Statement

My grief is not Jewish. My Jewish identity did not inform how I have responded to my sister's illness, yet I find myself reading Jewish authors to cope with it. Grace Paley's collection of short stories moves from my bed stand to my bag; the back cover has ripped from hapless transportation. The empathy and humor, in Paley's short stories, are entwined with the writer's sense of family. Reading Paley's stories, as well as Ruth Reichl's books, has informed the use of family as a Jewish value within *Doylestown*. Even when I was unable to be with my family for the Jewish holidays, I felt compelled to celebrate them because they connect me to the traditions I have grown up with and to my family. Family is not only a Jewish value but it is central to my cultural identity.

The collection includes Jewish content because I am Jewish, as is my family. The fictionalized family members in the collection observe the Jewish holidays culturally, if not religiously. My family is not religious. Over time, they have replaced Talmudic debate with fervent discourse about food. The recipes my grandmothers have passed down, which are in the collection, are a part of the Ashkenazi cooking tradition. Only some words in Yiddish have trickled down to the present generations, but my grandmother's recipe book, like the animals on Noah's ark, has two of every Eastern European food. There are two separate recipes for kugel, stuffed cabbage, as well as apple cake.

As the stories reflect a Jewish American experience, the collection is suffused with Jewish content. Yet, a Jewish character does not necessarily make a piece of artwork Jewish. *The House of Mirth* would not make it onto my list of Jewish books

because of its stereotypical and anti-Semitic portrayal of Rosedale. Nor would having one Jewish character necessarily make the book Jewish if it did not explore Jewish themes or subjects.

It's easy to claim that Sholem Aleichem, the author of the Tevye stories, which *Fiddler on the Roof* is based off of, is a Jewish author. He wrote about Jews in a Jewish language and he referenced the canon of Jewish religious literature. It is more difficult to argue that an author like Kafka, who never referenced a single Jew in his writing, is a Jewish author. Yet, *Metamorphosis* would still make it onto my lists of Jewish authors and Jewish books because it includes Jewish themes, such as alienation.

Within a broad range of secular culture, what makes literature Jewish is debated because Jewish culture is not monolithic. When Jewish identity historically was defined within the context religious practice, the rubrics were more explicit within the parameters of Jewish law, Halakha.

Lenny Bruce explained and poked fun at the propensity to label things as Jewish or non-Jewish within Jewish culture, where “pumpernickel bread” is Jewish and “Kool-Aid” is not.¹ The things that are non-Jewish in his spiel are so, sometimes, because they are foreign to Jewish culture. Other times, what defines “Jewishness” is subjective. A piece of writing that is written by a Jew, has Jewish themes, and or has Jewish subjects would fit within the parameters of what I define as a Jewish book.

¹ Bruce, Lenny. *The Essential Lenny Bruce*. Compiled by John Cohen. St Albans:

Not everyone will agree with this definition. The multifaceted nature of the canon makes it interesting.

Yiddish has crept into *Doylestown*, as I have begun to study the language this year. It has not been spoken as a first language for five generations in my family, yet specks of Yinglish pop up in our everyday conversations because of our cultural heritage. The depiction of my family's Jewish American experience is important to the collection because it is an extension of my cultural identity. I don't read Grace Paley solely because her books are Jewish, but I find comfort in their Jewishness. The language she conveys using a Yinglish dialect is familiar and endearing. When I make a Jewish recipe, likewise, I think of the generations of women and men that made the same food I am cooking.

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